

Message Text

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46

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7420

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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UNCLAS LONDON 17933

E. O. 11652:NA

TAGS: UR, PINT

SUBJECT: ZHORES MEDVEDEV ON SOVIET NUCLEAR AND SPACE
DISASTERS

1. LONDON SUNDAY PRESS OF NOVEMBER 7 PROMINENTLY
REPLAYS "NEW SCIENTIST" ARTICLE BY EXILED SOVIET
SCIENTIST ZHORES MEDVEDEV IN WHICH MEDVEDEV CLAIMS
THAT SOVIETS SUFFERED MAJOR NUCLEAR AND SPACE
ACCIDENTS IN 1958 AND 1960, RESPECTIVELY.

2. ACCORDING TO MEDVEDEV, 1958 CATASTROPHE TOOK
PLACE NOT FAR FROM BLAGOVESHENSK, WHERE A NUCLEAR
WASTE DISPOSAL AREA WAS LOCATED. THE WASTE HAD BEEN
BURIED, OVER THE OBJECTIONS OF SOVIET NUCLEAR
SCIENTISTS, AT A RELATIVELY SHALLOW DEPTH. HEAT
BUILDUP RESULTED IN A VIOLENT, VOLCANO-LIKE EXPLOSION
WHICH DISPERSED RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL OVER A WIDE AREA.
MEDVEDEV CLAIMS THAT "TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE
WERE AFFECTED AND HUNDREDS DIED," AND THAT THE AREA
REMAINS CLOSED TO THIS DAY.

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3. IN AUTUMN 1960, MEDVEDEV SAYS, KHRUSHCHEV ORDERED

THE LAUNCH OF A SOVIET MOON ROCKET TO COINCIDE WITH HIS ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK TO ATTEND UNGA SESSION. THE LAUNCH MISFIRED, AND IN HIS HASTE TO ASCERTAIN THE MALFUNCTION, MARSHAL NEDELIN ORDERED THE INSPECTION OF THE ROCKET TO BEGIN BEFORE THE FUEL HAD BEEN DRAINED. THE ROCKET SUDDENLY IGNITED, FELL BACK, AND (ACCORDING TO MEDVEDEV) "EVERYONE IN THE AREA WAS KILLED. THE DISASTER COST THE BEST BRAINS IN SOVIET SPACE TECHNOLOGY."

SPIERS

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